

## PART VI

## Livestock, Dairying and Poultry

General Importance

Dairying and poultry farming are the most important farming activities in Island County. There are 75 dairy farms, 120 poultry farms and 35 other livestock farms which make up 37 percent of all farms. Poultry farming is by far the most important. Poultry was the source of 50 percent of the county's total agricultural income in 1954. The value of all livestock and livestock sold in 1954 was \$2,028,831. This was four times greater than all crops sold during the same period. Island County is ranked ninth in the state in value of poultry products sold and 19th in value of dairy products sold.

Livestock and Poultry Trends

The general trend for all livestock and poultry is slightly downward. Cattle numbers have increased, particularly in the number of beef cattle. Beef livestock went up from 500 in 1939 to 3,600 in 1956. All other animals, such as hogs, sheep and horses, have decreased. The amount of milk sold reached a

Total Value of Island County Livestock: \$1,392,734

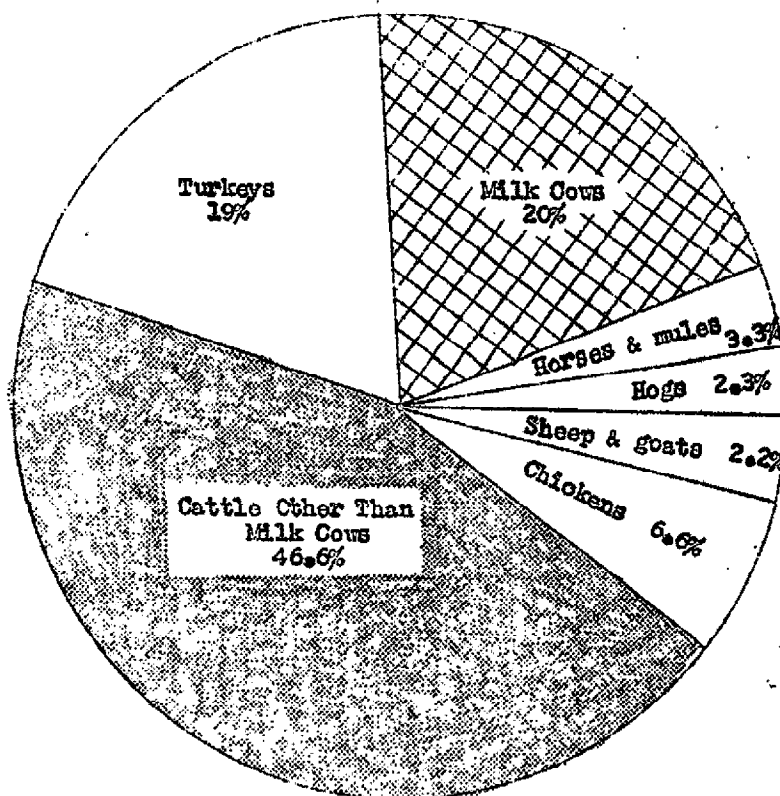


Figure 12.- Value of Livestock on Farms  
Island County, 1954  
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

peak during World War II and has declined since then. Decline was caused by installation of the naval base which through purchase of dairy farm land reduced the importance of dairying. Poultry and poultry products have followed a general downward trend. Poultry has decreased about 30 percent in volume since 1940. Horses and mules have declined with each census year since 1920. Hogs and sheep declined rapidly until about 1950. Decrease was at a smaller rate between 1950 and 1955.

#### Cattle: Dairy and Beef Farming

Dairy and beef cattle are major sources of farm income in Island County and make up a large part of the assessed value of farm property. Cattle are raised on three-fourths of all the farms. Cattle of all types account for about two-thirds of the total value of all livestock. Dairy cattle and milk cows have been decreased in number in favor of beef cattle in recent years. Dairy cattle were at a low figure of 4,200 head by 1955 compared with 6,200 head in 1942. Dairy cattle population has been decreased in northern Whidbey Island where land was acquired for military purposes. Most dairy cattle are in the Coupeville, Oak Harbor and northern Camano Island areas.

Milk production has gone down in Island County since the peak year of 1944. Dairy farms selling whole milk were lower by a hundred in 1954 than they were in 1949. Cream and butter production on farms has also been decreased. By 1954 commercial milk production was about six million pounds less than in 1944.

Table 25.- Cattle on Farms  
Island County, 1939-1956

Year	All Cattle (head)	Beef Cattle (head)	Dairy Cattle (head)
1939	6,300	500	5,800
1940	6,400	600	5,800
1941	6,900	900	6,000
1942	7,000	800	6,200
1943	6,500	600	5,900
1944	6,000	400	5,600
1945	5,600	300	5,300
1946	4,900	300	4,600
1947	4,800	300	4,500
1948	5,000	500	4,500
1949	6,000	900	5,100
1950	5,900	1,300	4,600
1951	5,800	1,400	4,400
1952	5,800	1,500	4,300
1953	6,900	2,500	4,400
1954	7,500	3,100	4,400
1955	8,000	3,800	4,200
1956	8,000	3,600	4,400

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, AMS  
Agric. Estimates, State of Washington,  
1939-1956.

Many farms have changed over to beef cattle on both Whidbey and Camano Islands. Beef cattle numbers started rising in the late 1940's, going up from 500 head in 1948 to 3,800 by 1955. Factors which favored increased interest in beef raising were the good demand and prices for beef, the fewer hours of labor required compared to dairying and the smaller investment in equipment necessary to produce beef compared to fluid milk. Island County farmers following industrial and part-time work adopted this practice. They also found that hardy beef cattle were efficient users of grass lands, woodland and unimproved pastures common to most parts of the area.

Table 26.- Dairy Products Sold From Farms  
Island County, 1920-1954

Year	Whole Milk Sold From Farms		Cream Sold From Farms		Butter Sold From Farms	
	(pounds)	(dollars)	(pounds)	(dollars)	(pounds)	(dollars)
1920	2,846,282	\$ 57,000	74,810	\$ 28,000	19,913	\$9,000
1929	6,278,740	138,700	313,000	153,405	2,120	1,019
1939	14,378,082	312,000	141,810	35,400	1,455	700
1944	17,883,605	572,255	30,563	19,105	1/	--
1949	12,599,499	466,803	29,631	17,976	--	--
1954	11,700,927	459,309	13,283	6,597	--	--

1/ After 1944 farm churned butter sold was too small to enumerate.

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

### Poultry Farming

From the standpoint of dollar value of products sold from farms, poultry raising is the leading type of farming. Sales of eggs, broilers, turkeys and other poultry returned an estimated \$1,291,190 to Island County farmers in 1954. The number of chickens kept on hand for egg production has ranged between 65,000 to 92,500 birds, while egg production has been about one million dozen per year. In recent years chickens and egg production reached a low figure in 1950 of 65,000 chickens and 1,020,000 dozen eggs sold. The Census of 1954 recorded a peak of about 92,600 chickens and sales of 1,144,000 dozen eggs. Eggs are commercially produced on over 160 farms.

Some Island County poultrymen specialize in growing broilers (fryer chickens) and pullets and hens for markets in the Tacoma urban area. In 1954 the county ranked eighth in the state in chickens sold. A total of 412,000 chickens were sold from 123 farms for the freezer and fresh meat markets. Fryer chickens sold numbered 350,500 and 23 farms specialized in this business.

Turkey raising has increased since 1939. In the 1950-55 period, 35 or more farms together have raised about 88,400 turkeys per year. Most of the turkeys raised are the heavy breeds for the holiday market. About 9 farms in Island County keep turkeys for breeding stock and egg production. In 1954, Island County ranked fourth in numbers of commercial turkeys raised.

Table 27.- Chickens, Egg Production, Turkeys  
Island County, 1939-1954

Year	Chickens (birds)	Egg Production (dozens)	Turkeys Raised (birds)
1939	128,101	1,490,775	65,447
1944	132,787	1,179,207	141,021
1949	65,325	1,019,871 1/	127,449
1954	92,593	1,143,731 1/	88,397

1/ Eggs sold from farms; does not include eggs used on farms.

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

Total Value of Poultry and Poultry Products Sold  
in 1954 - \$1,291,190

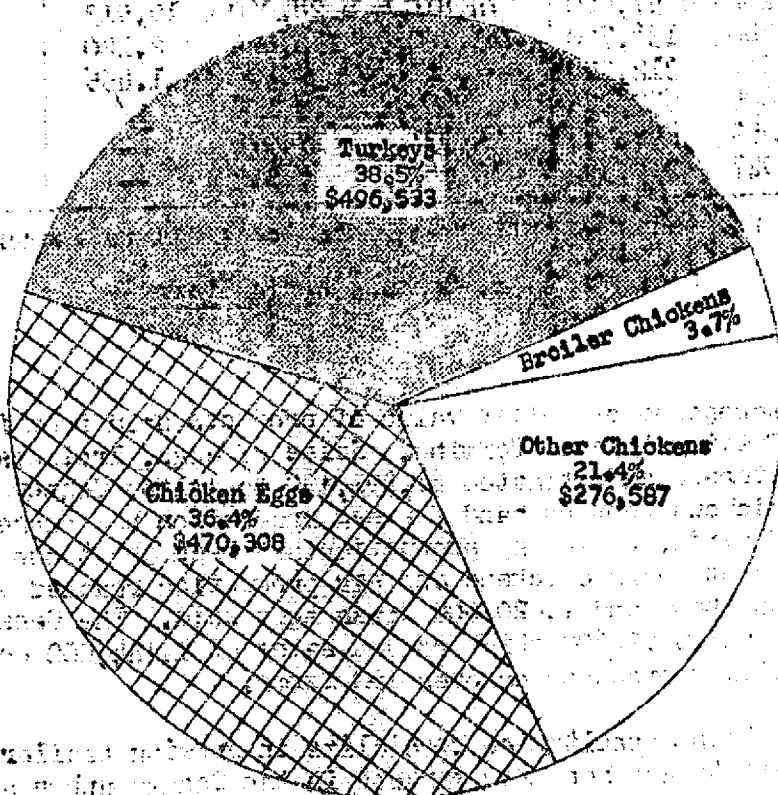


Figure 13.- Divisions of Island County Poultry Industry  
By Products Sold in 1954  
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

### Sheep

The raising of sheep as a livestock farming sideline has been steady since 1940. Interest in raising sheep has increased in recent years. In 1954, there were nearly 60 farms keeping sheep. Total sheep according to the Census was up to 1,338 head. In general, most of these animals are in small farm flocks of 20 to 30 head and are found well distributed over the two islands. The lamb

crop from the island area has been running 400 to 600 head per year. Wool shorn has been ranging from 5,000 to 7,000 pounds per year.

Table 28.- Hogs, Sheep, Horses and Mules  
Island County, 1939-1954

Year	Hogs (head)	Sheep (head)	Horses and Mules (head)
1939	700	1,429	781
1944	939	1,320	503
1949	828	1,162	365
1954	821	1,338	308

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

#### Hogs

While the number of farms raising hogs has dropped considerably since 1940, the total number of hogs raised within Island County has been steady. Since 1940, there has been a small hog population of 700 to 900 head kept by about 100 to 150 farms. Interest in raising hogs commercially has gone down since earlier years. Formerly, many farmers kept hogs to utilize skimmed milk left from cream separators. Most hogs were a sideline on dairy farms which shipped cream. Recent factors causing decline in the swine industry have been the increased costs of feeding, since farm supplies of skimmed milk became scarce, and the amount of labor needed for commercial production. Another change has been decline of farm butchering and home curing of bacon and ham, once a common practice in western Washington.

#### Horses

Horses kept on farms for work and transportation purposes have decreased in the last 20 years. Tractors, trucks and other machines have replaced these animals. Most of the present horses are used for pleasure riding. Rarely, today, are teams of horses used for farm work or logging—a use which was commonplace prior to 1925. Since 1920, when there were 1,130 horses in Island County, their number has declined to only 308 in the Census of 1954. In recent years about 100 farms have one to three horses for riding. Less than 10 farms breed horses and make commercial sales. Horses are well distributed over the islands and many are kept near resort and forested areas for riding.

#### Beekeeping, Bees and Honey

The last agricultural Census of beekeeping in Washington in 1950 showed that Island County had a relatively small industry in this specialty. About 50 farms kept bees and produced honey for home and some local trading. In general, the farms keeping bees had one to ten or less hives. Total hives in the county in 1950 numbered 360. Only 2 farms reported raising honey commercially. Total annual honey production is between 1,000 and 1,500 pounds per year. Beekeeping and honey production is lower than in 1920. The Census of 1920 showed that there were about 400 hives and about 5,000 pounds produced per year in the early 1920's.

Small Animal Industry: Rabbits, Fur Farming

A small number of farms specialize in or raise on a sideline basis small animals such as goats, rabbits and fur beavers. Goat raising includes a few animals kept on about 20 farms. The most recent Census in 1954 enumerated only 52 goats on Whidbey and Camano Islands.

Rabbits are raised on about 50 farms. As a sideline, rabbits are mainly raised for local use. Whidbey Island is noted for a large population of domestic rabbits which range wild. With few predators to limit them, domestic rabbits have spread widely over prairie areas. Many of these rabbits are hunted and used for game meat by local residents and visiting sportsmen.

Fur farming in recent years has expanded slightly. A recent mink farming directory showed there were four farms raising ranch mink in the Langley and Clinton areas of south Whidbey Island. In northern Whidbey Island there was one fur farming operation specializing in water beaver.